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Revised estimates relating to the report of the Secretary-General on the future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations

Section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services and section 36, Staff assessment

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee has considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Revised estimates relating to the report of the Secretary-General on the future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" (A/70/745), relating to section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, and section 36, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with the representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 21 March 2016.

2. The Secretary-General states that the above-mentioned report (A/70/745) was submitted as a follow-up to his report entitled "The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" (A/70/357-S/2015/682). Both of these reports and the information provided to the Advisory Committee include background information on the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/95-S/2015/446) and the action taken thereon, as follows:

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(a) On 31 October 2014, the Secretary-General commissioned a High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to conduct a comprehensive assessment of United Nations peace operations today and of how they can be made more effective, efficient and responsive in a changing world (see A/70/357-S/2015/682, para. 1);

(b) On 16 June 2015, the Chair of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations transmitted the report of the Panel to the Secretary-General, who brought it to the attention of Member States under identical letters dated 17 June 2015 addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (A/70/95-S/2015/446);

(c) On 2 September 2015, the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel (A/70/357-S/2015/682) was issued. In paragraph 36 of that report, the Secretary-General sets out a near-term agenda for action to make United Nations peace operations fit for purpose, focusing on actions that are being or can be taken forward in 2016, while also offering thoughts on actions to be considered by his successor and Member States. The agenda put forward by the Secretary-General in section IV of the report covers a broad range of areas, including: (a) strengthening capacities for conflict prevention and mediation; (b) reinforced global-regional partnerships; (c) tailored peace operations; (d) agile field support; (e) speed, capabilities and the performance of uniformed capabilities; (f) safety and security; and (g) leadership and accountability;

(d) On 3 November 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/6, on the strengthening of the United Nations system, in which it took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/357-S/2015/682) and the report of the High-level Independent Panel (A/70/95-S/2015/446) and decided to give further consideration during its seventieth session to the recommendations emanating from the initiative of the Secretary-General, in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the Fourth Committee, the Fifth Committee and other relevant bodies, in accordance with established procedures and in compliance with their respective purview;

(e) On 25 November 2015, the President of the Security Council made a statement on behalf of the Council in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security" (S/PRST/2015/22), in which the Council, inter alia, took note of the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations;

(f) On 23 December 2015, in its resolution 70/247, on questions relating to the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, the General Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to consider including proposals to strengthen capacities for conflict prevention and mediation in future budgetary submissions.

3. In his report on revised estimates (A/70/745), the Secretary-General indicates that the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations made a strong call for conflict prevention and mediation to be brought back to the fore. In its report, the Panel noted that core functions in support of prevention and mediation in the Secretariat continued to be funded by voluntary contributions which lacked predictable funding, and recommended a strengthening of and more reliable resourcing through the regular budget for the Secretariat's core prevention and mediation capacities. In paragraphs 37 to 44 of his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations

(A/70/357-S/2015/682), the Secretary-General addresses strengthening the range of United Nations responses and tools to prevent and mediate crises, including early engagement of the Security Council, regional offices, strengthening the preventive capacities of United Nations country teams and early action through the deployment of "light teams" of experts to work closely with resident coordinators to address specific situations.

4. In his report on revised estimates (A/70/745), the Secretary-General proposes to strengthen the conflict prevention and mediation capacities of the Department of Political Affairs. In paragraphs 34 to 39 of the report, he sets out objectives and strategies and states that the requirements in his proposal are guided by an overarching objective of making the Department of Political Affairs more operational and are geared towards rapid response in the area of conflict prevention and mediation, and therefore seek to enable it to support Member States and regional and subregional organizations more effectively in their conflict prevention and mediation engagements (ibid., para. 34). To that end, he proposes reinforcement of the staffing of the Department's six regional divisions as well as the Policy and Mediation Division and the Electoral Assistance Division (ibid., para. 36).

5. Information on the relationship of the current proposals to the biennial programme plan and programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 is provided in paragraph 40 of the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates (A/70/745). The Advisory Committee notes that no quantitative information is provided on the performance targets and outputs to be delivered as a result of the proposed increase in staffing levels. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that changes in programme performance and outputs, as a result of the proposed additional staffing of the Department of Political Affairs, would be included in the programme performance report of the United Nations for the biennium 2016-2017. **The Committee is of the view that requests for staffing increases should be based on an analysis of and accompanied by information on the impact of the proposed additional resources on performance targets and outputs to be delivered (see paras. 19 and 20 below).**

6. The resource and post implications of the Secretary-General's proposals are summarized in tables 1 to 4 of his report on revised estimates (A/70/745). The Advisory Committee notes that the additional resources for the biennium 2016-2017 resulting from the proposals contained in the report amount to $12,640,200 gross ($11,608,200 net), as set out in table 1 below.

Table 1
Resource and post requirements by section and subprogramme
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Budget section	*Additional requirements (post) (a)*	*Additional requirements (non-post) (b)*	*Additional requirements (a) + (b)*	*Post changes*
3 Political affairs				
Subprogramme 1. Prevention, management and resolution of conflicts	8 000.0	–	8 000.0	37
Subprogramme 2. Electoral assistance	241.2	–	241.2	1
Programme support	258.6	355.6	614.2	3
Subtotal, section 3	**8 499.8**	**355.6**	**8 855.4**	**41**
29D. Office of Central Support Services		2 752.8	2 752.8	
36. Staff assessment			1 032.0	
Total (gross)	–	–	**12 640.2**	
Total (net of staff assessment)	**8 499.8**	**3 109.4**	**11 608.2**	**41**

7. The additional resource requirements proposed are related to the establishment of a total of 41 posts for the Department of Political Affairs and related non-post resources, comprising 32 new posts and the conversion of 9 posts previously funded from extrabudgetary resources. Information on the proposed posts in the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates (A/70/745), indicates that the 32 new posts proposed for establishment include 13 positions previously funded on an ad hoc basis from extrabudgetary resources. A total of 22 of the 41 posts proposed are therefore being funded from extrabudgetary resources. The Advisory Committee was informed that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/247, the cost estimates for the proposed posts were based on a vacancy rate of: (a) 50 per cent for new posts in the Professional and higher categories and in the General Service and related categories; (b) 9 per cent for continuing posts in the Professional and higher categories; and (c) 6 per cent for continuing posts in the General Service and related categories (see also A/70/7, para. 57). The Committee was further informed that the 9 posts proposed for conversion would be considered as continuing posts, given that they had been filled through the staff selection process (see para. 23 below). **In this connection, the Committee points out that, in considering the staffing proposals of the Secretary-General, it examines the proposed posts against the requirements for mandate implementation; it also points out that any recommended post approved by the Assembly should be treated as a new post under the programme budget, regardless of existing funding arrangements, and that such a post should therefore be subject to the recruitment procedures and vacancy rates applicable to new posts.**

8. The proposed post changes are summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2
Proposed post changes by subprogramme/division and category/grade

Subprogramme division	*Total*	*Posts by category-grade*[a]
Programme of work		
Subprogramme 1		
Africa I Division		
Approved 2016-2017	26	1 D-2, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 6 P-4, 5 P-3, 3 P-2, 7 GS (OL)
Proposed (New York)	4	1 P-3,[b] 1 P-3,[c] 1 P-2,[b] 1 GS (OL)
Proposed (Nairobi)	3	1 P-4,[b] 1 P-3,[c] 1 LL[c]
Africa II Division		
Approved 2016-2017	25	1 D-2, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 4 P-4, 4 P-3, 5 P-2, 7 GS (OL)
Proposed	5	1 P-5, 1 P-4,[c] 1 P-3,[c] 1 P-2, 1 GS (OL)
Asia and Pacific Division		
Approved 2016-2017	15	1 D-1, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 5 P-3, 1 P-2, 4 GS (OL)
Proposed	3	1 D-2, 1 P-5, 1 P-4
Middle East and West Asia Division		
Approved 2016-2017	15	1 D-2, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 2 P-4, 3 P-3, 2 P-2, 3 GS (OL)
Proposed	2	2 P-4[c]
Americas Division		
Approved 2016-2017	14	1 D-1, 4 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 P-2, 4 GS (OL)
Proposed	4	1 D-2, 1 P-4, 2 P-3
Europe Division		
Approved 2016-2017	11	1 D-2, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 P-2, 3 GS (OL)
Proposed	4	1 D-1, 1 P-4, 1 P-3,[b] 1 P-2[c]
Policy and Mediation Division		
Approved 2016-2017	22	1 D-2, 2 D-1, 2 P-5, 7 P-4, 4 P-3, 1 P-2, 5 GS (OL)
Proposed	12	2 P-5,[b] 1 P-5,[c] 2 P-4, 3 P-4,[b] 1 P-3, 2 P-3,[c] 1 GS (PL)
Subtotal, subprogramme 1		
Approved 2016-2017	**128**	**5 D-2, 7 D-1, 19 P-5, 49 P-4/3, 15 P-2/1, 33 GS (OL)**
Proposed	**37**	**2 D-2, 1 D-1, 5 P-5, 22 P-4/3, 3 P-2/1, 1 GS (PL), 2 GS (OL), 1 LL**
Subprogramme 2		
Electoral Assistance Division		
Approved 2016-2017	23	1 D-2, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 10 P-4/3, 7 GS (OL)
Proposed (Addis Ababa)	1	1 D-1[c]
Programme support		
Approved 2016-2017	14	1 D-1, 2 P-4/3, 1 P-2/1, 10 GS (OL)
Proposed	3	2 GS (OL), 1 GS (OL)[c]
Total, Department of Political Affairs		
Approved 2016-2017	**264**	**1 USG, 2 ASG, 8 D-2, 15 D-1, 36 P-5, 88 P-4/3, 21 P-2/1, 5 GS (PL), 88 GS (OL)**
Proposed	**41**	**2 D-2, 2 D-1, 5 P-5, 22 P-4/3, 3 P-2/1, 1 GS (PL), 5 GS (OL), 1 LL**

Abbreviations: GS, General Service; PL, Principal level; OL, Other level; LL, Local level.

[a] All posts are located in New York unless otherwise specified.

[b] Posts proposed for conversion.

[c] Proposed posts previously funded on an ad hoc basis from extrabudgetary resources.

9. In paragraph 15 of his report on revised estimates, the Secretary-General states that the various activities and recommendations highlighted in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel (A/70/357-S/2015/682) are not stand-alone actions and build on the long-standing efforts and reform initiatives undertaken over the past decade to reinforce the Department of Political Affairs and make the Organization more fit for purpose to deliver on the promise of prevention.

10. In this regard, the Advisory Committee recalls that the report of the Secretary-General represents the second set of substantial proposals by the Secretary-General for increasing the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs since 2008.[1] The Advisory Committee notes that many of the ideas put forward in his report on revised estimates (A/70/745) are based on his earlier proposals, for example, the building up of the capacity of the regional divisions, the strengthening of the policy planning and mediation support capacities of the Department and the proposed staffing increase in the Electoral Assistance Division.

11. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the following table showing the evolution of the regular budget appropriations and voluntary contributions for the Department of Political Affairs since the biennium 2004-2005.

Table 3
Resource changes by biennium
(Millions of United States dollars)

Biennium	*Regular budget final appropriation*[a]	*Voluntary contributions to the trust fund in support of political affairs*
2004-2005	55.3	12.0
2006-2007	57.3	9.1
2008-2009	68.9	25.1
2010-2011	78.2	19.6
2012-2013	82.7	34.1
2014-2015	83.7	36.6

[a] Excluding the provision for special political missions.

12. In paragraphs 22 and 23 of his report on revised estimates (A/70/745), the Secretary-General states that despite the progress achieved over the past few years, much remains to be done and that the Department of Political Affairs still lacks financial stability and predictability across many critical areas. Furthermore, there is an increasing demand for United Nations engagement in conflict prevention and mediation, owing to the resurgence in the number of active conflicts observed around the world and a growing understanding by Member States and regional and subregional organizations of the potential of prevention. He further states that the Organization, through the Department, is now routinely requested to support these partners in the development and strengthening of their own capacities in prevention and mediation.

[1] See A/62/521 and Corr.1 and A/62/7/Add.32. See also General Assembly resolution 63/261.

13. In response to its request, the Advisory Committee was provided with the following table on the number of special political missions and peacekeeping operations undertaken in the previous 10-year period, by region.

Table 4
Number of special political missions and peacekeeping operations

Period	*Africa*	*Americas*	*Asia and the Pacific*	*Europe*	*Middle East and West Asia*	*Total*
Special political missions[a]						
2006-2007	16	2	2	1	6	27
2008-2009	16	0	2	2	6	26
2010-2011	16	0	2	2	6	26
2012-2013	19	0	2	2	9	32
2014-2015	19	0	2	2	9	32[b]
Peacekeeping operations						
2006/07	9	1	2	3	3	18
2007/08	9	1	2	3	3	18
2008/09	8	1	2	3	3	17
2009/10	8	1	2	2	3	16
2010/11	8	1	2	2	3	16
2011/12	8	1	2	2	4	17
2012/13	8	1	2	2	4	17
2013/14	9	1	1	2	3	16
2014/15	9	1	1	2	3	16

[a] Includes special envoys, sanctions panels and monitoring groups, and field-based special political missions that are deployed to specific countries or regions.
[b] Includes a total of 11 field-based special political missions, as follows: 7 in Africa and 4 in the Middle East and West Asia.

II. Observations and recommendations

14. The Advisory Committee notes that, in his report on revised estimates (A/70/745), the Secretary-General is proposing a substantial increase in the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs, with a 15 per cent increase in the overall staffing levels of the Department, including an increase of 29 per cent under subprogramme 1, Prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. **The Committee further notes that it experienced considerable difficulties in its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals owing to the lack of detail and justification in the report, as well as the timing of the submission of the report (see para. 15 below).**

Timing and budgetary process

15. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that every effort should be made to present proposals for major changes in resource levels in the context of the programme budget in order to facilitate the deliberations of the General**

Assembly and ensure the integrity of the budget process. In the Committee's view, the budget process should provide Member States with an opportunity for gaining a clear understanding of the overall resources to be employed towards the achievement of expected performance targets and expected outcomes, based on the translation of mandates into an effective proposed programme budget. In this connection, the Committee recalls Assembly resolutions 62/236 and 64/243, in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to avoid a piecemeal approach to the budget process and to ensure the fullest possible picture of the Organization's requirements.

16. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the submission of the proposals of the Secretary-General for consideration by the General Assembly outside of the programme budget process should have been avoided. In the light of the chronology of events leading up to the submission of his report (see para. 2 above), which shows that the report of the Panel was issued in June 2015, and taking into account the statement by the Secretary-General that the constraints facing the Department have built up over the past few years (see A/70/745, para. 23; see also paras. 9 and 10 above), the Committee is concerned that greater efforts were not made to submit the proposals for strengthening the Department of Political Affairs in time for the deliberations of the General Assembly on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, and avoid thereby a fragmentation of the budgetary process. The Committee recommends that the Assembly reiterate its request that the Secretary-General take the necessary steps to avoid a piecemeal approach to the budget process.**

17. In the light of paragraph 54 of General Assembly resolution 70/247, the Advisory Committee also requested clarification regarding the timing of the submission of the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates within such a short period following the adoption by the General Assembly of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, rather than in the context of future budget submissions. The Committee was informed that the Secretariat would normally consider the term "future budget" to refer to the programme budget for the next biennium (2018-2019). However, the Secretary-General was submitting his report at this time and urging timely consideration of his proposals by Member States owing to the urgency of prevention efforts and the need for immediate enhancement of United Nations efforts in support thereof. The Committee was further informed that the report on revised estimates had been presented in accordance with the regulation 2.8 and rule 102.4 (b)[2] of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

18. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that if the Secretary-General considered the requirements of the Department of Political Affairs to be of the highest urgency, his proposals should have been submitted in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Furthermore, the Committee is not convinced about the urgent need for the submission of the proposal of the Secretary-General, given that the demands on the Department have been increasing over the years (see para. 16 above), and taking into**

[2] Rule 102.4 (b) stipulates that revised and supplementary programme budget proposals may be submitted when they include activities which the Secretary-General considers to be of the highest urgency and which could not have been foreseen at the time the initial programme budget proposals were prepared.

account the progressive increase in the resources made available to the Department (see table 3 above). Moreover, given that the report of the Secretary-General was not submitted in time for the consideration by the General Assembly of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, the Committee considers that, rather than submitting an insufficiently developed report prematurely, further efforts should have been made to develop fully justified proposals based on a detailed analysis of requirements (see paras. 19 and 20 below).

Content

19. The Advisory Committee considers that the significant increase in resources being proposed for the current biennium should be fully justified and supported by a comprehensive analysis of requirements and of outputs to be delivered, taking into account current capacities[3] and relevant workload factors, as well as the other responses and tools described in the report of the Secretary-General for conflict prevention and mediation and the roles to be played by other entities of the United Nations system and other actors at the national and regional levels (see A/70/745; see also para. 3 above). **The Committee notes, however, that the proposals put forward are not supported by a fully developed analysis. The Committee is of the view that the justifications given and the substance of the report are not commensurate with the magnitude of the proposed increase in programme budget resources, and that information that would allow the General Assembly to make an informed decision is lacking. In this regard, the Committee reiterates the importance of improving the transparency and clarity of the information contained in the proposed budget documents, particularly with respect to the proposed changes in resources from one biennium to the next, including a more detailed breakdown of resource changes arising from new and expanded mandates and other proposed changes in the allocation of resources** (see A/70/7, para. 41).

20. **The Advisory Committee also emphasizes that the development of proposals for strengthening capacity provides an opportunity to optimize working methods, seek efficiencies and review capacities and structures, as well as organizational arrangements with other United Nations system entities. The Committee is of the view that, given the considerable increase in resources being proposed, consideration should also be given to prioritization and phasing of the implementation of the strengthening of the conflict prevention and mediation capacities of the Department of Political Affairs.**

Recommendations on resources

21. **While noting the interest expressed by Member States in strengthening conflict prevention and mediation capacities, and recognizing that there is increasing demand placed on the Department of Political Affairs in those areas, the Advisory Committee is not in a position to recommend approval of the proposals of the Secretary-General for the Department of Political Affairs, given the lack of full details and justification in support of the request for a significant increase in the staffing levels. The Committee therefore recommends**

[3] Including, for instance, special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General.

that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a fully justified proposal, taking into account its observations in the paragraphs above.

22. **Pending consideration of such a proposal by the General Assembly, and notwithstanding the comments of the Advisory Committee on the content and timing of the submission of the report, the Committee is of the view, based on the additional information provided to it regarding areas in which there is an increasing demand for United Nations engagement, that the Department of Political Affairs should be provided with some additional capacity. It therefore recommends that the General Assembly approve the following resources:**

(a) **In the Policy and Mediation Division, the Committee recommends approval of general temporary assistance resources to provide for the following positions for a 21-month period:**

(i) **One Senior Gender Adviser (P-5) position in the Gender Unit (see A/70/745, para. 72 (a));**

(ii) **One Gender Adviser (P-3) position in the Gender Unit (ibid., para. 72 (b));**

(iii) **One Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) position in the Mediation Support Unit (ibid., para. 72 (c));**

(iv) **Two Political Affairs Officer (P-4) positions in the Policy Planning Unit (ibid., para. 72 (e)).**

(b) **In the Africa I Division, the Committee recommends approval of general temporary assistance equivalent to two P-3 positions for a 21-month period;**

(c) **In the Africa II Division, the Committee recommends approval of general temporary assistance equivalent to one P-4 and one P-3 positions for a 21-month period;**

(d) **In the Middle East and West Asia Division, the Committee recommends approval of general temporary assistance equivalent to one P-4 position for a 21-month period.**

23. **In the light of its observations in paragraph 7 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that a vacancy factor of 50 per cent be applied to the above-mentioned positions for a 21-month period. The Committee recommends against approval of the remaining 31 posts and all related non-post resources proposed in the report of the Secretary-General.**

III. Implementation of the recommendations emanating from the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations

24. As indicated in paragraph 2 (c) above, in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682), the Secretary-General set out an agenda for action covering a broad range of areas, which, as indicated by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/6 will be addressed in the context of various intergovernmental bodies

(see para. 2 (d) above). In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that in its resolution 70/6, the Assembly decided to give further consideration during the seventieth session of the General Assembly to the recommendations emanating from the initiative of the Secretary-General, in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the Fourth Committee, the Fifth Committee and other relevant bodies, in accordance with established procedures and in compliance with their respective purview (see also para. 2 (d) above). **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to pay particular attention, when developing his proposals, to ensuring coherence and seeking synergies and complementarities within the Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system.**

25. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes that the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed budget for the peacekeeping support account for 2016/17 (A/70/751) also contains proposals emanating from the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. **The Committee is of the view that information accompanying budgetary proposals should be enhanced to provide a clearer and more holistic picture of the overall resource requirements related to the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.**

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

26. **The action requested of the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 80 of the report of the Secretary-General. Subject to its comments and recommendations in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Approve additional resources in the amount of $2,516,600 (net of staff assessment);**

(b) **Appropriate an additional amount of $2,516,600 (net of staff assessment) under section 3, Political affairs ($1,781,600), and section 29D, Office of Central Support Services ($735,000), as a charge against the contingency fund for the biennium 2016-2017;**

(c) **Appropriate an additional amount of $183,000 under section 36, Staff assessment, as a charge against the contingency fund for the biennium 2016-2017, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.**